



"GOOD morning," said the affable stranger, entering the office. "I represent the Squeechawken Mutual Life Insurance Company—capital, \$5,000,000. I've called to see if you would not take out a policy, and—"

"Sit right down," said the busy merchant, "and we'll talk it over. Excuse me; but will you hand me that bottle labelled 'Cure for Consumption'?" It's my time to take it. Thanks! Go on."

"The rates are exceedingly low," continued the agent, "and—for Heaven's sake, sir! Shall I call a doctor?"

"Oh, no, thanks!" feebly moaned the merchant, picking himself up from the floor; for he had fallen out of his chair as if in a faint. "It's only a slight attack of heart disease or paralysis—I don't know just which. I'm quite frequently affected. Now, please go on."

The agent was not quite so enthusiastic, but he went on.

"As I said, the rates are scarcely any thing; and, in your case, we would be pleased to make a discount, so you see—"

"Yes," interrupted the merchant. "Please excuse me again; but won't you hand me that box marked 'Yellow



Fever Preventer?' I've just come from where it was prevalent. Thanks! Please resume."

The agent was moving uneasily in his chair, and appeared to hesitate about pressing the matter further. But he made a last rally and said: "I have here, sir, a few statistics, which show the financial standing of our company. It is the firmest and most reliable—"

He paused; and a frightened look was on his face, for the merchant was on the floor, writhing and twisting as though in an awful fit. "Don't stop, sir," he managed to gasp to the terrified agent, who was collecting his papers and making for the door. "I'm just having a little epileptic fit. Quite subject to it—then, you—you know, I'll be all right in a minute!"

But the agent had fled, leaving a long, blue vacuum in the atmosphere, so fast had he gone.

"Well," chuckled the busy merchant, arising and brushing the dirt off his clothes, "it is hard work, and it soils one's clothes; but, by Jove, I knew the scheme would do the business. I shan't be bothered with any more of those agents for some time now. I'll be as cool as a cucumber in a minute, after I've had a drink of that good old 'Consumption Cure.' Ha, ha! 'Consumption Cure!' Wonder what the Kentuckian who distilled this prime old rye would say, if he heard it called that! Well, here's a go!"—Paul C. West, in Light.

HE KNEW THE BUSINESS.



Druggist—So you want to be a druggist, eh? Have you had any experience? Young Bilson (cautiously)—Some.

Druggist—Do you know the difference between Epsom salts and oxalic acid?

Young Bilson (promptly)—Oh, yes, sir. One kills you and the other doesn't.

—Golden Days.

A Patient Man.

"No, Mr. Trotter," she said firmly, "I repeat it a thousand times—no!"

"Well, keep on," he remarked, pleasantly; "that's only twice, and by the time you reach the sixth hundredth you'll be glad to vary it with a 'yes.' Will you kindly begin?"—Munsey's Weekly.

The Honeymoon's Last Quarter.

Young Wife (saying an affectionate good-bye to her husband)—Now, darling, you can't enjoy a moment while you are gone, can you, dearest?

George (off for a few days' yachting)—Well, my dear, I can't tell a lie.

Young Wife—Oh, darling, please do!

—Harper's Bazar.

The Door Departed.

Little Girl—Your papa has only got one leg, hasn't he?

Veteran's Little Girl—Yes.

Little Girl—Where's his other one?

Veteran's Little Girl—Hush, dear; it's in Heaven.—Babyhood.

THE EXPRESSMAN'S NERVE.

Breaking a Mirror Was Not a Crushing Calamity for Him.

J. Wyatt McGaffey, secretary of the Chicago Society of Artists, related this:

"Down on one of the south side avenues resides Jack Blythe, with his wife and two boys. It so happened that Jack had determined to remove from his flat to one of a few blocks away, and he made up his mind to oversee the job, but word came from the firm that a sudden press of business necessitated his running down to St. Louis.

"Left to her own resources, the good wife secured the services of an expressman, and every thing went swimmingly until the last load was being delivered at the new home. One of the chief adornments of Jack's library was a pier glass. It was a handsome piece, greatly prized by Jack, but the fates so willed that it should become a victim to the ruthless hand of the expressman, for he slipped, knocked it against the balustrade, and its beauty was forever spoiled.

"A feminine shriek and a masculine ejaculation followed the crash of the glass, then silence for a moment, while both viewed the ruins. The lady was the first to speak.

"You will have to pay for that glass."

"Right here came into play the expressman's natural nerve, flanked by suavity and politeness, and reinforced by an apparent contentment and humility of spirit.

"Madam, I acknowledge my carelessness, and am deeply pained at the result of it, and would be only too glad to replace that glass were my circumstances such as to permit of it, but my paying for it is entirely out of the question."

"Why can you not pay for it?" queried the indignant lady.

"Madam, I will state the case as concisely as I can, and you can then judge of my ability to make good the damage to your property. I am a married man, have three children, and receive the munificent salary of \$1.50 per diem for driving the wagon. Your pier glass was a valuable one, costing probably \$50. I would take my entire salary for a space of about six weeks to remunerate you a thing which you can readily perceive, would be impossible for me to accomplish without serious inconvenience to my family. However much I desire to replace it, and I assure you that such is my earnest desire, I must again state that it is without the pale of possibility."

"Then I shall make your employer pay for it."

"Madam, allow me to inform you that every thing he possesses is in his wife's name, and without a tedious suit at law you could accomplish nothing."

"The little woman was cornered. A lawsuit was out of the question, for then Jack would know all about the mishap, and the thought uppermost in her mind was to have the glass duplicated without his knowledge, necessitating its replacement immediately. The expense was a minor consideration.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said: "you take the dimensions, go down and get the glass and set it, and then I will pay the bill."

"The expressman was silent a moment before replying.

"Your proposition is a magnanimous one, madam, but I am forced to reject it. You forget that I am not working for myself. My time belongs to my employer. To go down town would take very nearly two hours, and this I could not conscientiously do without his knowledge and consent."

"This was too much for the now thoroughly indignant lady. She could see no way out of the difficulty, and had recourse to woman's last and most powerful argument—tears—which seemed to have the desired effect on the expressman.

"I will do it, madam. What my employer will say I do not know, but I will take all the chances to accommodate you. I will return as soon as possible."

"In due season he returned and set the glass. It fitted admirably, and but for the debris no signs of the accident remained. The bill, made out on the stationery of Brittle, Ware & Co., for just \$50, was presented and paid.

"And now for the sequel. Glass, you know, is one of those articles in which there is an immense profit to the retailer, and wholesalers quote it subject to several discounts. In this case the expressman got thirty per cent. off the list price, he representing himself as a dealer, and twenty per cent. more off for cash, leaving him a net profit on the deal of \$25—a pretty fair day's work for an expressman in dull times."—Chicago Mail.

A BANDIT OF TONQUIN.

Youthful Lun-Ky and the Vast Store of Gold He Has Stolen.

Lun-Ky is a desperado who leads a bandit horde in the mountain fastnesses near Dong-trien, in Tonquin. He is twenty years of age, is of commanding stature and singular ferocity, and has operated so actively during the last two years as to have become an object of terror throughout that part of the country. Unrequited love impelled the youth to adopt this lawless life. Two years ago he was a reputable lad, apprenticed to a saddler, and assiduous in his attentions to the daughter of one of the local magistrates. This girl, however, suddenly wedded an old and rich neighbor, and Lun-Ky disappeared from Dong-trien and blazed into notoriety as the boldest bandit chief in Tonquin. It is the ambition of the misguided youth to acquire so great possessions as to occasion his old and feeble inamorata severe heart-burnings.

The riches which Lun-Ky has amassed in two years exceed the bounds of credulity. Somewhat of a dandy in his tastes, he wears gorgeous silks and feathers and covers his bosom with a network of gold; his weapons are of the finest quality and include in their category jeweled scimitars, ebony-stock carbines and ivory-bitted poinards. Two months ago the brothers Roque and M. Costa, three Frenchmen temporarily residing in Tonquin, were captured by Lun-Ky's band. As soon as M.

Briffaud, the French Consul at Dong-trien, heard of this outrage, he applied himself industriously to securing the release of the captives, but the brigands, with whom intercourse was finally opened, demanded an exorbitant ransom, nor would they accede to any compromise. One day, therefore, the consul, accompanied by the village priest and attended by an escort of French marines, repaired to the mountains, bearing the required ransom. Having reached a lone spot, supposed to have been about five miles from the bandit camp, this little company was halted before a bamboo post upon which was hung an inscription saying that the troops must not go further without parley.

About this time Lun-Ky himself appeared in the distance and announced that the consul and the priest should proceed together, leaving the marines behind. It was another Hobson's choice, so the troops remained and the consul and priest went forward with the boats bearing a ransom. Reaching the assigned place, two miles distant, the ransom was carefully inspected and counted. It consisted of 100 pieces of silk, twelve watches and \$50,000 in coin. Lun-Ky objected to the silk, because it was not, as he complained, of the best quality. But the consul, speaking through the priest as interpreter, represented that the silk was the very best that could be obtained in Tonquin, and finally the chief was persuaded. Then the captives were delivered up, the bandits, to the number of 4,000, kneeling all the while in a circle, with leveled rifles, ready to fire at the first signal. As soon as the consul, the priest and the released men disappeared down the hillside the bandits struck camp and made off with proper haste.

The ransomed men say that Lun-Ky is revered by his fellow-bandits as an inspired being, and that his authority as chieftain is absolute. Lun-Ky has kindly given it out that as soon as the number of his followers has reached 7,000 he will swoop down upon his native village, capture his old sweetheart and strangle her venerable husband, first, however, cutting off the latter's ears and nose, this being a particularly humiliating offense in China. This announcement has occasioned a distinct feeling of uneasiness in certain quarters.—Chicago News.

OF FOREIGN ORIGIN.

Most of the Bugs Bred by Housewives Have Come from Abroad.

The carpet beetle, which has chosen Washington as the first place to make its appearance in as a domestic destroyer, is soon to spread through all American cities; at all events, the division of entomology in the Department of Agriculture so declares. It hides in cracks and crevices through the carpets, much as does the buffalo bug, which it resembles somewhat. Curiously enough, by the way, the buffalo bug does not live in this city at all; it only thrives north of the Baltimore latitude, and has not thus far gone further west than Chicago, though it already swarms in all the towns between New York and the metropolis by the lake. It was introduced to this country from Europe, of which it is a native, in 1874, being brought over to Boston in a batch of carpets consigned to a firm in that city. Ohio has only known it within the last two or three years; doubtless it will reach the Pacific coast before long. It is an interesting fact that the new carpet beetle is not a novelty as a pest; it has been known for a long time past, but only as a "museum destroyer," addicted to attacking any thing edible to be found in collections, such as dried spiders, stuffed birds and skeletons out of which grease has not been thoroughly dried.

It is a melancholy thing to record the fact that bugs imported from abroad almost invariably drive out the native American insects of like species by the operation of the law which determines the survival of the fittest. This has been the case with the domestic cockroach. The common black cockroach in this country today is an immigrant from the shores of the Mediterranean, very bold and fierce, and is much given to travel, so that it is often called the "ship cockroach." It has made its way all over the world, and within the last few years has almost driven the brown American cockroach, once so numerous, out of existence. The fate of the brown cockroach closely resembles that of the black rat, which has been wiped off the surface of this continent by the bigger brown "ship-rat" from Persia. The brown cockroach grows to be about as big as the black cockroach—an inch in length, that is—but the European cockroach has been familiar with the conditions of civilization for many more centuries, and is thus better able to adapt himself to circumstances as he finds them here; hence his survival, according to Prof. Riley's theory.

The most successful cockroach in this country today is the so-called "Croton bug," which came from Germany, and first excited attention at that time when the laying of the Croton water pipes gave opportunities for the distributing of its species. Notwithstanding popular prejudice to the contrary, the cockroach is an insect of very cleanly habits; it takes the greatest care of its person and is constantly engaged in washing itself as a cat does, drawing its antennae through its jaws to moisten them. Not all cockroaches live in dark and dirty places; there is a kind native to the West Indies, that lives in the tops of trees and shrubs. The cockroach, ground up, is included in the German pharmacopoeia as a vermifuge. Persian insect powder, by the way, has been discovered recently to be an infallible remedy for tapeworm, taken in ten successive hour doses of a tablespoonful each; it is altogether harmless. The cockroach is declared to be the oldest of air-breathing animals; fossils of the insect found in the coalbeds are so vastly numerous that the carboniferous epoch is sometimes referred to as the age of cockroaches. Many varieties of giant cockroaches are found in the tropics that grow to be four inches in length and fly like birds.—Washington Cor. St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

FIRESIDE FRAGMENTS.

—When boiling tough meat, a little vinegar added to the water will make it much more tender.

—To Bake Tomatoes: Wash the tomatoes, make a deep hole in the stem end, fill this with a little sugar, salt and pepper. Lay them on buttered tins and bake.—Housekeeper.

—How to Fry Croquettes: There should be enough fat to float the croquettes as they are put in; fry at once as many as will float easily; when they are golden brown take them up with a skimmer, lay them on brown paper to free them from grease, dust them with salt, and then serve them hot.—N. Y. Observer.

—Shirred Eggs: Break into a shallow buttered platter, and after dusting with salt and pepper, bake in the oven until the whites are set. Have ready the same number of pieces of toast, around which has been poured a cream sauce; divide the eggs neatly with a knife, and lay one on each piece.

—Feather Cake: One and one-half cups of sugar, two eggs, well beaten, two tablespoonfuls melted butter, one cup of sweet milk, two cups of flour, two tablespoonfuls of baking powder, a little salt, one-half teaspoonful of vanilla. Good in three layers with any filling, chocolate or cocoanut.—Banner and Herald.

—Cucumber is very digestible when eaten properly. It can not, indeed, be otherwise when it is remembered that it consists mainly of water, and that those parts which are not water are almost exclusively cells of a very rapid growth. In eating cucumber it is well to cut it into thin slices and to masticate them thoroughly. Even the vinegar and the pepper that are so often added to it are of service to the digestion if not taken in excess.—London Hospital.

—The common housefly is an almost unbearable intruder upon domestic comfort, and is said to be sometimes a carrier of disease germs. Yet it has its uses as a household scavenger, pouncing upon every bit of decaying, unwholesome matter and doing its little best to make up for the neglect or oversight of the "household queen." Still, their presence in kitchen and dining room, to say nothing of the sleeping apartments, is so great a discomfort that every effort should be made to drive and bar them out.

—Graham Bread: Sift one quart of graham meal, and preserve the bran to stir in with the wheat flour in the morning. Mix the graham with one-half cup of yeast or one-third of a cake of compressed yeast in a little over one pint of water or part milk, warm in winter. In the morning add wheat flour, but not enough to allow it to be kneaded. By mixing the bran in with flour in the morning it somewhat prevents its getting too sour. If blenheim is preferred, take a piece of dough, flouring the hands, and work it lightly into little round biscuits. Fill the pan, crowding the biscuits a little, and raise it all one hour in a moderately warm place. Bake in a hot oven. If you like you can add a piece of butter the size of an English walnut, and three or four teaspoonfuls of sugar.—Boston Globe.

DRESSING AN ART.

The Golden Mean Which Must Be Attained by Women of Taste.

It requires something more than a long purse and a fashionable milliner to enable one always to be dressed just as one ought to be. The best-dressed woman is by no means always the one who is arrayed with the most splendor and costliness; and to know how to dress according to the occasion is as much an art as to know how to dress at all. In one's own home to out-dress one's guest is a rudeness and an unkindness; the house, the equipage, the retinue, the entourage, the whole establishment is there to speak for one; the personal attire can be of the most modest. One certainly would never revive the singular French custom of receiving in one's night-dress and in bed, an affection of simplicity which was really an extravagance of luxury, since it served the purpose of exhibiting a profusion of rich laces in curtains, coverlet, cap and dress, and general equipment, rivaling the spider's web and worth a King's ransom; for apart from the indecency and impropriety of that fashion, it is not wise to assume any simplicity whose subterfuge can be seen through. The dress that is not conspicuous with dazzling nor any object of envy, and yet fine enough to show respect for one's guests, is easily arranged by the woman who knows how to dress at all. But, on the other hand, an attire that is too modest is equally out of place on the guest, for it seems to assume that the entertainment is inferior and the convives of no consequence. It is better for the guest to be overdressed than for the hostess—better for the guest than to be underdressed; she need not feel uncomfortable if she has come in a dress outshining that of every one else present, since the worst that can be said of it is that she thought the occasion worthy of it.

But, in fact, the artist in dress will avoid either of these extremes, wearing nothing too rich or too poor, too fanciful and esthetic, or too plain and coarse. Conspicuous dressing has been one of the disorders of the age, and if the tailor-made dress had not run into the region of costliness it would have wrought wonders for women of all grades. The perfectly dressed woman causes no one to turn the head, and glance at her, unless for her charming ensemble, but if by any accident the glance is arrested and fixed on her toilet, then it is seen to be faultless. Only in the private dens of one's boudoir, where none but intimates have access, can any eccentricities of dress be indulged, and there one can cultivate the picturesque at one's own sweet will if it is really worth while to give the subject so much attention. The chief thing to remember is that a style of dress becomes a part of one's own personality, of one's individualism, and one would always prefer that that should be pleasing.—Harper's Bazar.

—Finger nails grow at an average rate of half an inch in four months.

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